

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes of October 27, 2015**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair John Quinn III (absent), Vice-Chair K. David Maxwell, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, and Kenneth W. Goslant. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Ray Hudson (Road Foreman), Maggie Kerrin, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Acting Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.
- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None.
- V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. Highway Foreman Ray Hudson.** Mr. Hudson had emailed his written report to the Board members beforehand and asked if they had any questions or comments. Selectman Goslant asked if all the pedestrian crosswalks had been painted. Mr. Hudson said that some still needed to be done and this will be finished before the snow arrives. Selectman Goslant would like a Highway Committee meeting scheduled for the near future so that various issues can be discussed in depth, such as the possibility of subcontracting the roadside mowing, etc. Mr. Hudson felt that there also should be some consideration of needed infrastructure upgrades in the downtown area, such as installing new catch basins, etc. He would like to see a balanced approach so that addressing problems affecting the backroads doesn't come at the expense of dealing with real concerns affecting the former Village. He felt that better coordination between the Highway Department and the Utility Department might be one way to achieve this.

Selectman Gadbois asked how the Town Mechanic is handling the new computerized vehicle maintenance tracking system. Mr. Hudson felt that although the record keeping does get a little behind when things get busy in the garage, it has proved very beneficial in tracking expenses, etc. He has asked the Town Mechanic to set aside an hour or so at the end of each day for data input to avoid a backlog. Selectman Gadbois asked if he could see a printout. Mr. Hudson said that would not be a problem since the Accounting Department received a copy every month.

Selectman Gadbois asked if Bull Run Road had suffered any significant damage after the derailed Amtrak engine was transported over it. Mr. Hudson has been checking the road periodically to make sure nothing bad develops. He felt that the bulk of the road was fine but he is keeping a careful eye on the area used to access the accident site. Mr. Hudson noted that Amtrak has promised to restore the site to our satisfaction. Selectman Gadbois wanted to know if we can be sure that the weight of the transported engine didn't cause any fundamental road damage. Since the transporter had twelve (12) axles, Mr. Hudson believed that the engine's weight was so evenly distributed over the wheels that the effect should not have been more than a normal multi-axle truck. Selectman Goslant asked if there had been any issues with Amtrak. Manager Schulz said that they have been very cooperative throughout the process. The Accounting Department has been gathering the documentation needed to get reimbursement for employee hours, road materials, etc. Mr. Hudson added that the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) also has been monitoring the accident location.

Manager Schulz then turned back to the need for a Highway Subcommittee meeting. He felt that there needs to be a thorough discussion of Highway Department priorities and any upcoming special projects. Although the Highway Department has been trying to perform special project work in-house in order to save money, there does need to be some sort of balance between this type of work and regular road maintenance.

Selectman Goslant said that even though the Select Board did agree to residents' requests to close the northern loop of Robinson Road, the situation seems to have gotten out of hand since the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) got involved and started imposing various conditions. What had first appeared to be a relatively inexpensive response to real concerns about unsafe traffic speeds, roadside litter, etc. now has major expenses looming and he felt that the whole matter should be revisited. Selectman Doney agreed, noting that the AOT now is requiring new guardrails, landscaping, reseeding, etc. Acting Chair Maxwell noted that the affected property owners had expressed some willingness to help out with any costs incurred. Manager Schulz said that they did but now these expenses have gotten much larger than anyone envisioned. It is his recommendation that any action on this matter be postponed until next spring. He will stay in contact with the property owners to gauge their level of commitment given the changed circumstances.

Acting Chair Maxwell and the other Select Board members thanked Mr. Hudson for his report as well as all the good work being done by him and his crew.

#### VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **October 13, 2015 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

#### VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #09-16.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #09-16 in the amount of \$125,388.53. Selectman Gadbois noted the purchase of a bullet-proof vest for \$695. He asked if there is an inventory of all Northfield Police Department (NPD) equipment. Manager Schulz said that there was for these vests since their service life is five (5) years. Selectman Gadbois inquired if these purchases should be in the NPD's CIP account since the vests are replaced on a regular schedule. Manager Schulz said this was possible. It has not been done this way in the past since the purchase of these bullet-proof vests usually are funded by grant monies and not through property taxes. Selectman Gadbois felt that the Highway Department goes through a large number of tire chains each winter. He asked if it were possible to purchase better quality chains that may cost more at first but last longer. Mr. Hudson said that the more expensive ice pick chains are reserved for the vehicles that stay on the paved roads. The regular chains are used on the backroads and kept in service as long as possible until they are "paper thin" or the links break. He added that he tries to stockpile chains from the previous winter since their cost usually climbs at the start of the winter season and then declines sharply as spring approaches and dealers try to dispose of their glutted inventory. Selectman Goslant noted an invoice for replacing a radiator on one of the NPD Explorers. He thought this had been covered on the last warrant. Manager Schulz stated that the current invoice was for labor costs. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through October 11, 2015.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$85,553.28. Selectman Gadbois asked about some NPD "Special Detail" expenses. Manager Schulz said that this was related to the train derailment and its aftermath. These costs will be reimbursed by Amtrak. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

## VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **New Telephone System for Municipal Offices.** Manager Schulz stated that the current phone system is outdated and that a number of features, such as voice mail, no longer work. He and Utility Office Manager Doug Reed solicited proposals from vendors to provide and install a new system. Of the three (3) written proposals received, they believe that the best one is from TDS Telecom, which includes a discount contingent on the Town committing to five (5) years of service. He and Mr. Reed met with some TDS Telecom representatives earlier today and learned that because some additional equipment will be needed for two (2) additional lines, the written quote provided earlier will have to be revised. The proposal covers all the municipal offices including the Police Station, the Town Garage, Ambulance Bay, Wastewater Treatment Facility, etc. Even with the revised figures, the cost of the proposal from TDS Telecom remains substantially lower than those from the other vendors (Caleidoscope Communications and Vermont Panurgy). Acting Chair Maxwell asked if there was money in the CIP account for this. Manager Schulz said that there are sufficient CIP funds in the accounts for the phone system specifically and for general building improvements. Selectman Doney would like firm numbers before any contract is signed so that the vendor cannot come back later for more money. Motion by Selectman Doney, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to authorize Manager Schulz to negotiate a service contract with TDS Telecom to install and maintain a new telephone system for the municipal offices. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Elm Street Retaining Wall Bids.** At the previous meeting, the Select Board awarded the contract for engineering services to Otter Creek Engineering. Their proposal was in the amount of \$22,300 and Manager Schulz believed at the time that state grant funds would cover most of this. He subsequently learned that he had been mistaken about the amount of grant money available and the actual figure is closer to \$9,500. Therefore, at his request, Otter Creek Engineering has agreed to withdraw its proposal. There is a proposal from DeWolfe Engineering that is less detailed than Otter Creek's but is otherwise acceptable and would fall within the new cost limits. Selectman Gadbois noted that a study was done regarding the retaining wall about twelve (12) years ago by an engineering firm no longer in business. He asked if it was possible to resurrect the study and have it reused by another engineering firm at a reduced price. Selectman Goslant predicted that the new engineer will say that the earlier study is obsolete and must be done over again. Acting Chair Maxwell believes that the old study only looked at shoring up the retaining wall and did not include any long-term solutions. Manager Schulz noted that Otter Creek's bid was more expensive because it did explore a number of options in detail, such as reducing the wall's height and/or width or perhaps eliminating it altogether. Selectman Doney asked how old is the current retaining wall. Mr. Hudson believes that it is at least thirty (30) years old. Selectman Goslant asked if there is a target date for this project. Manager Schulz said there was not but given the retaining wall's increasingly poor condition, this matter needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. He suggested that he could contact the State of Vermont to see if the grant amount could be restructured to allow for a more comprehensive engineering study. In the interim, the Select Board needs to formally withdraw its bid award to Otter Creek Engineering. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to withdraw the bid award to Otter Creek Engineering and to authorize Manager Schulz to obtain additional information on this matter. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **FY 16/17 Municipal Budget Process.** Manager Schulz reported that budget sheets were distributed to the Department Heads recently and will be returned to the Accounting Department soon. He would like to hold a meeting with the Select Board's Budget & Financial Review Committee (Selectmen Maxwell and Quinn) in the near future in order to fine tune the budget-creating process. There will be some complications this budget season as the union contracts will be expiring at the end of the current fiscal year (06/30/16). This will mean that budgets on union personnel costs will need to be based on projections regarding the final union contracts.

- d. **Northfield Snowmobilers, Inc. Trail Requests (Well Field, South View Drive, Fairground Road).** Northfield Snowmobilers, Inc. (NSI) has made its annual request to allow a snowmobile trail through the Well Field. In addition, NSI would like to traverse short distances of Town roads in order to connect their trail system. Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi updated his recommended stipulations that must be accepted before allowing the trail through the Well Field including that the trail must be properly marked, no refueling allowed there, etc. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the NSI snowmobile trail requests provided that the conditions in Superintendent DeMasi's memorandum are followed to the letter. **Motion 4-0-0.**
- e. **Public Hearing (Fox Farm Road Discontinuance).** The public hearing will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2015. A separate site visit will be held beforehand.

**IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **Green Stormwater Infrastructure Workshop.** The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) will be holding this workshop in the Brown Public Library's Community Room twice this week: on Wednesday, October 28, 2015, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and on Thursday, October 29, 2015, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Selectman Gadbois felt that this workshop is especially relevant to the water garden system installed on Central Street near the Common.
- b. **Recreation Committee Update.** Selectman Goslant reported that the new picnic tables were removed from the Common and will be stored at the Municipal Pool after they have been stained. There are issues regarding Memorial Park and the Falls Park that he would like to discuss in full at a later time with Manager Schulz and Highway Foreman Hudson, such as expanding the usable area of the Falls Park, etc.
- c. **Possible Tree Removal.** Although it might not be a popular subject to bring up, Selectman Goslant feels that it might be time to discuss removing the large spruce tree on the Common. It has gotten too big to be used for the Christmas tree lighting, dominates the landscape, etc. Selectman Doney would prefer not to take it down but it may become necessary for safety reasons.

**X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.** There were no questions regarding the written report.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a personnel matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:35 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to come out of executive session.  
**Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:10 p.m. No action was taken.

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to adjourn.  
**Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of November 10, 2015.